

- 22 -

CLAIMS:

1. A communication system comprising:
determining means operable to determine an attribute
5 of a communication device;
identifying means operable to identify an avatar by
using the attribute, wherein the avatar is such that it
conveys to a viewer thereof information about a person; and
communicating means operable to communicate the
10 avatar to the communication device in a virtual
environment.
2. The communication system as claimed in claim 1,
further comprising replacing means operable to replace the
15 avatar with another avatar.
3. The communication system as claimed in claim 2,
wherein the identifying means is operable to identify the
avator by comparing the attribute to a communication device
20 identifier that is associated with the avator.
4. The communication system as claimed in claim 3,
further comprising recording means arranged to allow the
person to record the communication device identifier.
25
5. The communication system as claimed in claim 4,
wherein the replacing means is further operable to replace
the communication device identifier with another
communication device identifier.
30
6. The communication system as claimed in claim 5,
further comprising selecting means operable to allow the
person to select the avator from a plurality of other
avatars.
35
7. The communication system as claimed in claim 6,
wherein the selecting means is further operable to allow

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

- 23 -

the communication device identifier to be selected from a plurality of other communication device identifiers.

8. The communication system as claimed in claim 7,
5 wherein the determining means is operable to determine the attribute by processing caller identification data associated with the communication device.

9. The communication system as claimed in claim 8,
10 further comprising messaging means operable to create a text, an audio and/or a video message that is associated with the avatar.

10. The communication system as claimed in claim 9,
15 wherein the avatar and the plurality of other avatars depict an activity that involves the person.

11. The communication system as claimed in claim 10,
wherein the communication device comprises a mobile
20 telephone and the attribute comprises a telephone number of the mobile telephone.

12. A communication system comprising:
an environment support means operable to support at
25 least one virtual environment that can be accessed by a first person; and
a communicating means operable to communicate an avatar in the virtual environment to the first person subsequent to the first person accessing the environment,
30 the avatar being such that it can convey to the first person information about a second person.

13. The communication system as claimed in claim 12,
which the environment support means is operable to
35 determine a level of authority associated with the second person, and provide the second person with access to the virtual environment if the level of authority is deemed

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

- 24 -

appropriate.

14. The communication system as claimed in claim 13,
wherein the environment support means is operable to allow
5 the first person to assign the level of authority.

15. The communication system as claimed in claim 14,
wherein the environment support means is such that it
allows the first person to arrange the virtual environment
10 such that it has a desired appearance.

16. The communication system as claimed in claim 15,
wherein the environment support means is operable to allow
the first person and the second person to exchange other
15 information via the virtual environment.

17. The communication system as claimed in claim 16,
wherein the other information comprises multi-media
content.

20

18. The communication system as claimed in claim 17,
wherein the communicating means is further operable to
allow the second person to control whether the avatar
conveys the information to the first person.

25

19. The communication system as claimed in claim 18,
wherein the environment support means is operable to allow
the first person to access the virtual environment via a
communication network, the communicating means also being
30 operable to communicate the avatar in the virtual
environment to the first person via the communication
network.

20. The communication system as claimed in claim 19,
35 wherein the information conveyed by the avatar to the first
person comprises audio and/or video information.

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

- 25 -

21. A communication method comprising the steps of:
determining an attribute of a communication device;
identifying an avatar by using the attribute, wherein
the avatar is such that it conveys to a viewer thereof
5 information about a person; and
communicating the avatar to the communication device
in a virtual environment.

10 22. The method as claimed in claim 21, further
comprising the step of replacing the avatar with another
avatar.

15 23. The method as claimed in claim 22, wherein the
step of identifying the avatar comprises identifying the
avatar by comparing the attribute to a communication device
identifier that is associated with the avatar.

20 24. The method as claimed in claim 23, further
comprising the step of recording the communication device
identifier.

25 25. The method as claimed in claim 24, further
comprising the step of replacing the communication device
identifier with another communication device identifier.

26. The method as claimed in claim 25, further
comprising the step of selecting the avatar from a
plurality of other avatars.

30 27. The method as claimed in claim 26, further
comprising the step of selecting the communication device
identifier from a plurality of other communication device
identifiers.

35 28. The method as claimed in claim 27, wherein the
step of determining the attribute comprises determining the
attribute by processing caller identification data that is

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

- 26 -

associated with the communication device.

29. The method as claimed in claim 28, further comprising the step of creating a text, an audio and/or a
5 video message that is associated with the avatar.

30. The method as claimed in claim 29, wherein the avatar and the plurality of other avatars depict an activity that involves the person.
10

31. The method as claimed in claim 30, wherein the communication device is a mobile telephone and the attribute is a telephone number of the mobile telephone.

15 32. A communication method comprising the steps of:
supporting at least one virtual environment that can be accessed by a first person; and
communicating an avatar in the virtual environment to the first person subsequent to the first person accessing
20 the environment, the avatar being such that it can convey to the first person information about a second person.

25 33. The method as claimed in claim 32, further comprising the step of determining a level of authority associated with the second person, and providing the second person with access to the virtual environment if the level of authority is deemed appropriate.

30 34. The method as claimed in claim 33, further comprising the step of the first person assigning the level of authority.

35 35. The method as claimed in claim 34, wherein the step of supporting the virtual environment comprises the step of arranging the virtual environment such that it has a desired appearance.

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

- 27 -

36. The method as claimed in claim 35, further comprising the step of exchanging other information between the first person and the second person via the virtual environment.

5

37. The method as claimed in claim 36, wherein the other information comprises multi-media content.

10 38. The method as claimed in claim 37, wherein the step of communicating the avatar to the first person comprises the step of controlling whether the avatar conveys the information to the first person.

15 39. The method as claimed in claim 38, further comprising the step of allowing the first person to access the virtual environment via a communication network, and the step of communicating the avatar in the virtual environment to the first person via the communication network.

20

40. The method as claimed in claim 39, wherein the information conveyed by the avatar to the first person comprises audio and/or video information.

25 41. Software comprising at least one instruction for causing a computing device to carry out the method as claimed in any one of claims 21 to 40.

30 42. A computer readable medium comprising the software as claimed in claim 41.

BEST AVAILABLE COPY